

A SPIRITUAL REVIEW FOR SISTERS

SPONSA REGIS



VOL. XXII NO. 12

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Mystery of the Transfiguration	265
<i>S.M.C.</i>	
"The Mercies of God Forever"	270
<i>Rev. Bruno M. Hagspiel, S.V.D.</i>	
The Epistle of St. James	276
<i>Rev. Augustine Klaas, S.J.</i>	
One Sister to Another (VIII)	280
On Praying Always	283
<i>Rev. Robert B. Eiten, S.J.</i>	
Library Notes	287

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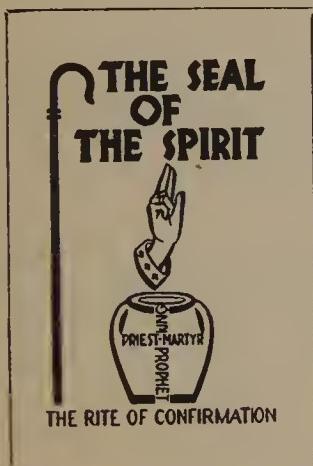
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THE MYSTERY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

"I said you are gods" (John 10, 34)

IN the Gospel story the mystery of the Transfiguration is presented as a remarkable and unrivalled occurrence in the life of our Blessed Savior. This apparently singular experience occurred during the third year of Jesus' public ministry. It was witnessed only by three chosen Apostles in the privacy of a mountain top and under charge of strict secrecy. "Jesus cautioned them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one, till the Son of Man has risen from the dead'" (Matt. 17, 9).

Indeed, it must be admitted that this mystery is the most unique and singular marvel in the life of Christ; it stands alone, isolated from the long series of events which like a divine symphony compose the terrestrial career of the Word made flesh. While every other mystery stands between its antecedent and its sequel, like the orderly links in a chain, the Transfiguration remains in solitary grandeur, a flash of splendor and magnificence, momentarily revealing to us the skyline of eternity. Since it has no anchorage or duplicate in this world, it properly and radically belongs to the next. It is not an experience of the life of faith here, but of the life of glory hereafter. That is the essence of the mystery: transporting heaven to earth, it opens the portals of our fatherland, to give us a close-up view of the life to come. "He took me in spirit to a mountain, great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. . . . And the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it. For the glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. 21, 10-11, 23).

These considerations doubtlessly account for the fact that the great mystery of the Transfiguration is often overlooked and perhaps underestimated in our spiritual literature and in our spir-

itual lives. Yet, a study of the Gospel texts reveals in it a twofold purpose. The primary one, which is also the most obvious and immediate, was concerned only with the three favored eye-witnesses, Peter, James and John. St. John Chrysostom thus refers to it in his homily for the feast: "To assure them even by sight and to show with what glory He is to come, He revealed and unveiled it as far as they could stand it in this life, lest they, especially Peter, should mourn their own or the Lord's death." Evidently this loving design of the Sacred Heart to comfort and encourage His feeble, fickle disciples has no direct bearing on us. But the second purpose of the mystery, more universal yet more obscure, touches us most intimately and personally. St. Leo speaks of both of them in his sermon on the Transfiguration:

"In this Transfiguration, it was intended principally to remove the scandal of the Cross from the disciples' hearts, lest the humiliation of His voluntary Passion shake the faith of those to whom the excellence of His hidden majesty had been revealed. But, with no less foresight, the foundation was laid of the hope of holy Church, that *the whole Body of Christ might realize with what a change it was to be endowed, and that the members might promise themselves a share in that honor which had shone forth in their Head*" (II Nocturn, lesson 4).

Here, then, is another mystery which might prove the most inexplicable in the whole liturgical cycle, but which can be properly and adequately understood within the luminous perspective of the Mystical Body. This latter purpose, the heart and core of the mystery, likewise forms the object of the feast, as it is beautifully expressed in the collect of the day: "O God, who in the glorious Transfiguration of Thy only-begotten Son didst confirm the mysteries of the faith by the witness of the fathers, and by Thy voice from the shining cloud didst wonderfully signify our perfect adoption as sons, in Thy mercy deign to make us co-heirs with this King of glory and call us to share in this same glory. . . . Amen."

"The perfect adoption of sons:" these are the key words to the understanding of today's festival and its mystery. They likewise explain why, as stated above, the Transfiguration is more an experience of heaven than of earth, because this perfect adoption will be realized only "in patria," through our complete conformity to Him who by nature is the co-equal Son of the Father. Through incorporation into Him at baptism there began our present conformity through grace and charity. This initial, im-

perfect phase of our divine adoption must be completed and consummated by our perfect resemblance to Christ in glory. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us," exclaims St. John (responsory 3 lesson), "that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . Now we are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, *we shall be like to him*, for we shall see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy, just as he also is holy" (1 John 3, 1-3). The members of the Body must resemble their Head, not merely here in grace and virtue, but much more in the glory and splendor of the fatherland.

"Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight in love. He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace, with which he has favored us in his beloved Son" (Eph. 1, 4-6).

However, it would seem that this first declaration of our supernatural adoption did not satisfy the boundless liberality and loving kindness of our Father in heaven. He wishes to show us the full sweep, the entire scope of our divine destiny as the members of His Son and co-heirs with him in eternity. Hence He determined to give us a second, more impressive, more convincing and complete revelation, lest we should ignore or contemn the dignity to which we are called, and the love with which we are cherished.

A second time the three divine Persons are present to testify to our trinitarian relationship. But now we behold the consubstantial Word, no longer shackled in the fragile, fleshy garment of mortality, but dazzling with the inexpressible beauty and immortal splendor of the divinity. "His face shone as the sun and his garments became white as snow" (Gospel). We hear again that fear-filling voice from the heaven of heavens: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear him" (*idem*). If we would fathom the grace of our adoptive sonship, we must first know Him who is Son by nature. If we would value properly our possessions as co-heirs with Christ, we must learn to estimate the infinite riches that are His by right. If we would realize what it means to be His members, let us understand Him who is our Head. Therefore, the heavenly Father says to us:

"This is my beloved Son, whom the Godhead does not separate from Me, nor power divide, nor eternity set apart. This is My Son, not by adoption, but by nature; not created from another, but begotten of Me; not made of another nature like Me, but born of My being, equal to Me. . . . This is My Son, who did not seize by robbery the equality He had with Me, nor presumptuously usurp it, but abiding in the form of My glory, in order that our common plan for the restoration of mankind might be carried out, bowed down the unchangeable Godhead even to the form of a slave" (*homily of Pope St. Leo on the Transfiguration*).

There appeared also on Thabor the Holy Spirit, under the symbol of the bright cloud, which signifies the radiant glory and ineffable bliss which constitute the inheritance of the children of God. They are clothed with glory as with a garment and they drink of the torrent of divine pleasures. "Those who possess God in the beatific vision, although they retain their own proper substance, are clothed with an extraordinary and almost divine form, so that they seem to be gods rather than men" (*Roman Catechism*, part I, ch. 13). As His children they are carried into the inaccessible light of the Godhead, into the bosom of the Father, to the side of the only-begotten Son, there to possess the same glory as His, and to enjoy the same happiness. "Glory and wealth are in his house: and his justice remaineth for ever and ever" (*offertory*).
* * *

Such is the inner meaning of the mystery of the Transfiguration. In the postcommunion of the Mass we pray for the grace to attain to it by the understanding of a purified mind, indicating the preparation required of us in order to participate in it fruitfully. The mystery reveals the full development of the grace of our adoption, its acme and consummation. For this reason the feast which celebrates its liturgical re-enactment should be singularly dear to all consecrated souls, because the holiness for which they are striving is simply the full flowering of that supernal vocation bestowed on them in Christ as His co-heirs and mystical members. "God has called us by his holy calling, according to his own grace which is now manifested, by the enlightenment of our Savior Jesus Christ" (*responsory 6 lesson*). Thus each annual recurrence of the feast should be another call, a renewed invitation from our heavenly Father to pursue our work of sanctification with greater earnestness, to approach ever nearer to the Ideal which He has

shown us "on the holy mount:" "This is my beloved Son; hear him."

The mystery of our Lord's Transfiguration corresponds to that of our transformation, the former being the model and exemplar of the latter. Therefore it is evident that our transformation must, and will eventually, affect both body and soul. As Christ redeemed the whole man, as His grace purifies and sanctifies the whole man, so membership in His Mystical Body must include the whole man and him "whole" throughout. That is why in our efforts after holiness both body and soul must have a share, both must submit and contribute to the work of sanctification, as both will share in the reward of deification hereafter. The body with its powers and senses should be neither destroyed nor desecrated; the soul with its faculties should be neither ignored nor inflated.

Certainly this mystery calls us, urges us to spiritual heights which might easily frighten and discourage us, in the keen consciousness of our inherent weaknesses, our many-sided imperfections. But let us become convinced of the power and efficacy of the grace that is working within us, when we cooperate and surrender ourselves to its divine action. The secret of the Mass gives us this startling but unquestionable assurance when it asks not only that our gifts be sanctified by Christ's Transfiguration, but also that "the splendors of His illumination may wholly cleanse us from our sins."

We have only to recall the instantaneous effect wrought on the Apostles by the mere sight of these splendors. For them it was a moment of heaven, of ecstasy and triumph, of unrivalled rapture. As they beheld, momentarily unveiled, that Light which is the life of men, they were carried out of themselves by the sheer joy and wonder of it. They would have wished to remain there forever in the contemplation of such majesty and magnificence, in the enjoyment of such blissful companionship. What, then, will be the result when this same Light of life, this same Jesus, Son of God and Savior of men, enters into our souls in holy Communion, there to effect another Transfiguration through the operations of His power and love? What a transformation will He not achieve, if we surrender ourselves entirely to His cleansing, healing, deifying touch?

Oh, that touch of Jesus which healed the sores of leprosy, cured the eyes born blind, opened the ears once deaf, blessed the

little children, absolved the penitent from guilt, restored the dead to life and wrought so many marvels of mercy and compassion called forth by human misery! At His touch, at His spiritual contact with our souls in holy Communion, all fear, all hesitation and sluggishness should vanish and we should be prepared to follow Him with unstinted generosity.

Let us, then, be ready to ascend the rugged mountain of prayer and to face the chilling darkness of pure faith which enwraps its summits. Willingly let us leave behind the comforting, familiar sights and sounds of the world below. Let us bravely travel the dark and winding paths of this upper region, endure its loneliness, privations and discouragement. For if we spend the night of this life on this holy mount of prayer and sacrifice, we know with certainty that when "the days dawns and the daystar arises in (our) hearts" (epistle), i.e., after death, we shall see the Beloved face to face evermore.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

S.M.C.

"THE MERCIES OF GOD FOREVER"

SAINT Paul has made us realize that now we know only in part; that our human vision, when lifted to the contemplation of God and His divine attributes, can see only through a glass and in a dark manner (1 Cor. 13, 12). Neither intellectually nor imaginatively can we grasp God in the essential oneness of His being. We, who are composed of parts, cannot conceive of that supreme Wholeness by which God is inseparable from His attributes and His attributes are inseparable one from another.

Therefore, as children do, we must focus our attention on one thing at a time and then put the parts together. It is difficult to rise trembling from the contemplation of God's justice and to proceed to the equally compelling consideration of His mercy. Both are true, both are of the essence of God Himself, and to approach Him by way of one to the exclusion of the other would be to narrow the mind to a one-sided view, hence to a distorted one. Our study of God's mercy completes but does not supplant what we know of His justice. The Pentecostal fires that melt the frozen and warm the chill are at one with the dew that tempers the heat and moistens the arid places. The mighty wind that shook the place where the Apostles awaited the coming of the Holy

Spirit is another version of the tender words of Christ: "Peace I leave to you, my Peace I give unto you."

Our souls need the stern and steadyng thought of God's justice to keep them energetic and earnest in the tremendous matter of serving God and attaining to eternal salvation. In order to thrive, however, we have equal need of the light and warmth that come from a joyous outlook toward the future and a childlike confidence in God's mercy. This may be more easily achieved when we become aware of the essential quality of God's mercy, which is the overflowing goodness of an omnipotent Father, spending itself upon the misery of His children. Because sin is the greatest of man's miseries, it is the principal field in which the divine compassion exercises itself and its supreme activity consists in freeing man from this evil and its tragic consequences.

If we wish to understand more fully this most lovable of God's attributes, we must impress deeply upon our minds the two outstanding facts concerning it. It is, first of all, boundless. Secondly, it takes precedence, as long as God's grace is operative, over all the other attributes of God. God's mercy must necessarily be boundless, since, as an attribute, it is identified with Him and therefore endowed with His infinity. The human mind reaches out blindly to grasp this concept of boundlessness, but drops back helplessly into its restraining limitations. That God's mercy is boundless, that it is inexhaustible, is a divine light to which man, with sin heavy upon him, can hardly lift his darkened eyes. And yet one may say that the story of God's mercy runs parallel with that of man's sinfulness.

We may picture to ourselves a human being so thoroughly kind and compassionate that we could appeal to him with confidence in any need. We could multiply this goodness again and again, and yet God's goodness would rise above it into the regions of its infinity, farther than heaven is removed from the earth, nearer to man than his innermost love of himself, a height which the staggering human imagination cannot scale, a depth which human guilt, great as it is, can never exhaust. We may find a helpful example for imitation in the practice of a holy priest, who on his deathbed confided to me his custom of picturing the Sacred Heart of our Lord, immediately after holy Communion, as a large and glowing furnace. He would then gather together the faults of the day and those of his past life and, with an act of perfect con-

trition, cast them into the glowing furnace. They seemed like the smallest flake of wool which, as he saw with joy, was always consumed long before it could reach the depth of the furnace.

Holy Scripture gives the assurance that God's mercy takes precedence over His omnipotence, His wisdom, all His other attributes, and it makes use of all the treasures of His divine Providence. St. James says (James 2, 13) : "Superexaltat misericordia judicium." This means that mercy exalts itself above judgment and therefore it is not subject to it. This teaching is beautifully expressed in the oration of the Mass for the tenth Sunday after Pentecost: "O God, who best shewest Thy omnipotence in Thy willingness to show mercy and to pardon!" In other words, God's power is manifested not only in creating a world out of nothing, in raining fire and brimstone upon its rebellious cities, in submerging a sinful race in the waters of the Deluge, but rather it is manifested by sparing His creatures and forgiving them. God's mercy is the place of healing where man is made whole; God pours the fullness of forgiveness and restoration into the span of the sinner's life upon earth. Therefore the greater a man's misery, the more confidence can he have in the healing and comforting power of God's mercy.

When, in the depths of eternity before the world began, the plan of creation lay luminous in the mind of God, sin also was visible to Him in the mirror of His divine omniscience. Had mercy not been present, the prospect of sin must needs have deterred God from the act of creation. Surely, it was not necessary for God to concern Himself with so poor and ungrateful a race. But mercy was in the eternal counsel of the Trinity, seeking an opportunity to exercise itself and to come to the rescue of a degenerate race; and it is to divine mercy also that we owe the fact of our creation.

Then, when heaven and earth in the newness of their creation were resplendent in the sight of God, and man had been placed into his radiant Paradise home, sin showed its ugly face and destroyed the loving plan of God. But this did not counteract the workings of divine mercy. On the contrary. Although God's first plan had been frustrated, His mercy prepared a second and a far more beautiful one. According to the first, man was to be subjected to a short and an easy test in the Garden of Eden; then, in an ecstasy of love he was to be exalted to the vision of God in Heaven. But divine mercy did not fail. The second Person of the

Holy Trinity would, through the instrumentality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, assume a human nature. The testing of man on the earth was destined to be more severe and of longer duration, but he would have a companion on his pilgrimage: God's Son, who would participate in all his trials and sufferings and through whom all the labors and sacrifices offered for the love of God would win for him an increase of sanctifying grace in this life and greater joy in the life to come. The first plan held no vision of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice, or of Mary who was to be as fair as the moon and brighter than eastern skies at dawn. How empty our firmament would have been without these resplendent figures, Christ and His Mother! Because of sin and God's answering mercy we have them. Because of them we can cry out: "O felix culpa!" O happy fault! O blessed guilt!

That which transpired at the beginning of human history was to be typical of the entire story of mankind and repeats itself in the life of every individual who has at one time frustrated God's plan for him, but has subsequently opened his heart to the workings of divine mercy. The Ruler of the universe is not so poor that He has but one plan for the salvation and the sanctification of a human being. If one plan is frustrated, a second is immediately in readiness, a third, a tenth, a hundredth. The unending riches of divine mercy cannot be exhausted through human erring. And do not believe that the new plan is but a miserable substitute for the original one. Every new provision on the part of God is more beautiful than the preceding one, in the manner in which it behooves the divine goodness to function, and is therefore not detrimental to divine wisdom, which seeks to transform evil into good and thus to destroy the ruinous work of the arch-enemy of the human race.

As the story of God's mercy continues, we see throughout the succeeding centuries of the period of the Old Testament that man in his folly has tried frequently to escape from God's mercy, only to be pursued by it, to find it knocking at the door of his heart seeking admission. If entrance was refused, divine forgiveness would wait until man had recovered from the intoxication and the sleep of sin, then knock again. And finding entrance at last, when man confessed and repented of his sin, the latter disappeared as completely as though it had never existed and vanished even from the eye of God. Clear and convincing are the words of the

Holy Spirit uttered by the prophets: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Is. 1, 18). "Behind my back I shall cast your sins, so that they shall never again come before my eyes" (Is. 38, 17). "I shall sink them in the depths of the sea so as never to think of them any more" (Mich. 7, 19).

As the Old Law merged into the New, the story of God's mercy reached the pinnacle of its beneficence. Man cannot look upon the unveiled Face of God and live; but love and mercy found a way. God veiled His beauty in a human face; man found himself redeemed by God made man. Suffering and death are things a man can understand; a man knows what it is to labor and to live in poverty. When Christ came poor into the world and worked with His hands and loved men with a human heart and let them hang His Body on a Cross, man as it were touched God's mercy with his hands.

To create the world God used but His word, His "Fiat." To redeem it He gave all that He possessed as man: His Body with all its members, His Blood to the very last drop. Man, craving love, could feel himself beloved and he saw a God athirst for his return of love. "Passus est non solum dura sed et indigna! Ecce quomodo dilexit!" He has suffered not only that which is hard, but also that which is shameful! Behold how He has loved!

It is difficult for man, with the beat of the passing hour in his ears, to realize the timelessness of the Redemption. That Calvary is, now and always, is another aspect of God's inexhaustible mercy. Man, throughout his life stretched upon the cross of his sinfulness, needs but to cry out with the contrite voice of the dying thief and he will hear the life-giving reply from Christ on His Cross beside him. Our Lord did not upbraid the thief for his life of sin, his last minute repentance. He made him a promise: Paradise! At once, and in His Redeemer's company! For all time the penitent thief will have the distinction of being the first and only person authentically declared a saint before his death and the only saint canonized by the human voice of Christ.

Lest even this powerful lesson fail to reach man in his daily living, God has tempered it to the words of Christ, spoken in more homely fashion while He walked the earth. Children clamor for a story and sometimes the same story again and again. Our Lord, with His eyes upon the crowd around Him and upon the

generations yet to come, told a short story, and another, and still another, so that we might understand in all its phases the manner of God's dealing with the sinner.

The Jews were a pastoral people, and well they knew the ways of a shepherd with his sheep. Our Lord spoke close to their listening hearts when He told them of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine in the desert and goes in search of the missing sheep. He fears neither mountain passes nor the parapets of chasms and finds the sheep among thorns and briars. He loosens it though His hands bleed as He does it. He does not whip it along, scolding while He chases it back to the fold, but He caresses it, places it lovingly upon His shoulders and carries it home. With quickened step He walks the narrow way, crying out with joy to every passerby: "Rejoice with Me! I have found My sheep that was lost!"

Our Lord Himself interprets the story, lest the sinner in his dullness fail to understand: "I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance" (Luke 15, 7). Can it be that one repentant sinner is the cause of greater joy to God and His angels than a multitude of the just would be? We must not misunderstand. God does not love the sinner more than He does those who have remained faithful to Him; but it is the repentant sinner who needs the special solicitude of the divine Shepherd and who draws most deeply from the overflowing fountains of God's mercy.

For the women, our Lord had a special story that they would easily understand. Every woman could place herself into the position of the one who swept out all the corners of her house and moved all the furniture in her search for the lost drachma. Every one of them could feel her joy at finding it at last, and in this joy come closer to the heart of God in its jubilant love toward the creature that had returned to Him after a long and strenuous search.

(To be continued)

BRUNO M. HAGSPIEL, S.V.D.

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THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES

REFLECTIONS FOR RELIGIOUS (IV)

Chapter 2, verses 14 to 17: “*What will it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but does not have works? Can the faith save him? And if a brother or a sister be naked and in want of daily food, and one of you say to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ yet you do not give them what is necessary for the body, what does it profit? So faith, too, unless it has works, is dead in itself.*”

IT is not enough to listen piously to the word of God; we must translate what we hear into action. We cannot have a true active faith in Jesus Christ and then go around making unkind and unjust distinctions among people. Faith has to influence conduct, has to show itself in good deeds. Faith is certainly a prized possession in itself, but without accompanying good works it is dead; it will not bring us to salvation. There just is no life in it. We have to do merciful and charitable deeds if we want to receive a favorable verdict on the day of judgment. What good is faith, if it is not activated by love and virtuous action? St. Paul says: “... and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, yet do not have charity, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13, 2). Hence our faith must be a living, pulsing thing, dynamic with deeds of charity and of all the other virtues.

In the Old Law it was not sufficient for salvation merely to belong to God’s chosen people, though that in itself was a great privilege. The prophets preached good works. So did John the Baptist. And didn’t Christ tell us to be like the wise man building his house on a rock, the rock of good works? Whereas “everyone who hears these my words and does not act upon them, shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house on sand” (Matt. 7, 24-27). And didn’t He also say that it was not enough to cry “Lord, Lord!” to enter the kingdom of heaven, but “he who does the will of my Father in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 7, 21-23)? The fig tree that failed to produce fruit was condemned by the Lord and it withered away.

St. James cites the poor again. It is not enough to look on them with pity, wish them well, tell them to eat and put some clothes on. What good is this futile language and this idle weeping?

Something, surely, but not enough to help the poor very much. The whole point is to satisfy that hunger and clothe that nakedness. That demands something more substantial than words of useless advice and tears of compassion; it demands action, an activated faith. That alone will bring relief to the poor and ultimately the Christian to his reward in heaven. Such active charity will make the religious a source of great edification to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Verses 18 and 19: "*But someone will say, 'Thou hast faith, and I have works.' Show me thy faith without works, and I from my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well. The devils also believe, and tremble.'*"

In this controverted passage St. James seems to be saying that while works can easily be shown to spring from faith, faith alone without works is not true faith and cannot be proved genuine. In other words, faith of its very nature will produce works. A challenge is thrown down here: prove that faith can so much as exist without works. Take the extreme example of the demons: they believe in God's existence, but even they do not stop at mere belief; they tremble before God's power and justice. Although we might expect it to be otherwise, the natural, diluted faith which demons have is also operative, though not, of course, for salvation. To put it another way: faith without accompanying works is a kind of monstrosity; authentic faith is always operative. At least in the practical order faith cannot be completely isolated from works.

It is superfluous to stress the importance of faith and the spirit of faith in the life of religious. They must highly value and treasure it, must strengthen and deepen it as the years go on. This will be done negatively by avoiding sins against faith and by banishing willful doubts. Doubts on matters of faith should be cleared up, if possible, and if they still persist, they should be steadfastly ignored. Religious must constantly study the doctrines of faith, learn more about them by attending religion classes and by reading good books on Catholic truth. Courses of theology offered to religious are an excellent step in this direction.

Religious must also often thank God for the gift of faith, by which we give God glory and share in His divine wisdom. Let them assimilate it ever more profoundly and spiritually by meditation and prayer, so that it becomes a part of the marrow of their being, so that they judge persons, events and everything in the light of supernatural faith. The Council of Trent proclaims that faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification. And St. Paul says: "He who is just lives by faith" (Rom. 1, 17). How much more he who is striving for spiritual perfection? Religious must make frequent acts of faith, must deepen the foundation virtues of faith, particularly humility, increase their faith steadily by works and sacrifices, communicate it to others, defend it, bear hardships and suffer for it, die for it, if need be.

Worldliness, a cynical, skeptical attitude of mind, stubbornness in holding to one's opinions, a disordered, unregulated life, these things tend to weaken the faith, just as does uncontrolled, imprudent, excessive reading of novels, secular magazines and newspapers. Inordinate addiction to movies, radio, television, shows and sports also present hazards for the life of faith. Religious must beware of these pitfalls and vanquish them by a simple, strong, all-conquering spirit of faith: "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 John 5, 4).

From this triumphant faith spring charity and good deeds. Earnest faith is what gives religious the dynamism so evident in their works— their schools, hospitals, social projects, contemplation and manual work. Perhaps there is some danger today that religious go all out for too many external works, that a certain unwholesome activism threatens to dominate their lives, that an overwhelming multiplicity of works of all kinds is beginning to crowd out their spiritual exercises, spiritual reading and prayer life. This undue accentuation of action tends to diminish the spirit of faith, tends to bring down the life of religious from the supernatural to the purely natural plane. Hence, a proper balance between faith and works must be maintained at all costs. Faith must reveal itself in good works and motivate them, but good works must be done in such amount and manner that they do not hinder but rather increase faith. That is the ideal to be striven for.

Verses 20 to 26: "But dost thou want to know, O senseless man, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Dost thou see that faith worked along with his works, and by the works of faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as justice, and he was called the friend of God.' You see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. In like manner, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith also without works is dead."

To drive home his point St. James cites two examples of faith accompanied by works. The patriarch Abraham, the Old Testament's most outstanding model of staunch faith in God, revealed his faith in his many good deeds, but never so much as when he resolutely offered his son Isaac for sacrifice in obedience to God's command. His active faith was a fruitful source of grace for him; he became a very intimate friend of God and is today a great saint in heaven. Even Rahab, the courtesan, despite her sinful life, had an operative faith in God, which led her to do remarkable deeds of charity, and these in turn brought about her conversion, repentance and reception of sanctifying grace.

The New Testament has many more examples of shining faith: Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the Apostles and disciples, the martyrs, confessors and virgins of the early Church, the thousands of saints and holy ones of God all down the centuries to the present day. What extraordinary models of strong faith do we not find among them! Specifically, the founders of religious orders and congregations all exhibited great faith: Benedict, Francis, Bernard, Dominic, Ignatius, Vincent de Paul, Alphonsus Liguori, Teresa, John of the Cross, Francesca Cabrini and many, many more. These religious founders also maintained the proper balance between faith and works.

Let us conclude with this striking statement of Cardinal Prosper Lambertini (later Pope Benedict XIV), who in his world-famous official four-volume work on the beatification and canon-

ization of saints, lays down the qualities of practical faith to be sought for in those who are proposed for sainthood:

"We say that the common habit of faith is discerned: 1) by the external profession of those truths which are believed interiorly by faith; 2) by the observance of the Commandments; 3) by prayer to God; 4) by submission to God, the Catholic Church and its visible head, the Roman Pontiff, in all that pertains to belief and action with reference to eternal salvation; 5) by spreading the faith to others, or at least by a desire to do so; 6) by the fear of God; 7) by the worship of God and of the saints; 8) by horror for sin and by penance for sin committed; 9) by patience in adversity; 10) by joy in good works; 11) by humility and self-abasement. Likewise we say that the heroic habit of faith is discerned by these very same acts, if they are frequent and accompanied by facility, promptitude and joy, and if from the circumstances there is present an element of difficulty above the ordinary, something that wins admiration and raises the person above the common way of acting even of upright men. Obviously, this takes place with the help of the Holy Ghost's gift of understanding."

Blessed are you if you are led in all things by the spirit of faith, for "it is a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1, 19).

(To be continued)

*St. Mary's College,
St. Mary's, Kansas.*

AUGUSTINE KLAAS, S.J.

ONE SISTER TO ANOTHER (VIII)

DEAR SISTER:

The thought of Lady Day, 1951, brings to mind that delicately beautiful picture of the Assumption by a Chinese artist. It catches all the graceful charm of the Woman who was "perfectly natural, perfectly human, perfectly feminine," and at the same time suggests the reason — she was "full of grace."

The whole composition sings of freedom and joy — earth with glad cooperation has released its hold; heaven stoops to embrace; the body of God's Mother has awakened in quick response to the desire of her spirit; the winds and clouds have caught her up and bear her swiftly on. Time, too, has lost its hold; no longer can

it lie like a chain upon her heart. She is free, joyously free, in the timeless reaches of eternity. This is the new *Sursum corda* of the century-honored Day of the Great Lady: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things" (introit of the new Mass of the Assumption).

With new triumph can we sing to our Mother: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people." We who still chafe beneath the constraining laws of time and space, who still feel the tensions of life in the body, can rise triumphant with Mary, the daughter of God blessed above all women upon the earth. Rich with the jubilee gift of our Holy Father in Christ, we can stand among the saints before the throne of the Most High and praise our Mother as Queen of Heaven and Mistress of earth. We have always seen her there, of course, enthroned with Christ amid the stars, but we rejoice that the Vicar of Christ, as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, has declared her there beyond the power of doubt in the minds of men.

"Sing ye to the Lord who mounted above the heavens to the East, for the Virgin Mary has been taken into the bridal-chamber of heaven, to the King of kings who sitteth on a throne amid the stars." "Declare it with the voice of joy, alleluia. Declare it even to the ends of the earth, the Lord hath delivered His people, alleluia." For is not Mary the first-fruit of His triumph, granted to Him preveniently that He might receive from her the mortal flesh for His strange duel with death and sin? Not only His own human nature hypostatically united to the Word of God has ascended with a jubilee, but Mary's wholly human nature, also, has been assumed above the heaven of heavens to the east — this is the burden of our new *alleluia*; this is our Holy Father's jubilee gift of new joy!

While I was mulling over these thoughts on our Lady's new glory, the little *Messenger of the Guard of Honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* arrived. It contained a vivid first hand account of the proclamation of the dogma (by Fr. Eustace Smith, O.F.M.) that I must share with you. A half-million people of every tongue and nation in eager silence; the firm, resounding petition of the Cardinal Sub-Dean made "in the name of the Sacred College of Cardinals, the universal body of Catholic Bishops and faithful;" the grave answer of the Holy Father; the sung plea for grace as the vast throng chanted the *Veni Creator*; and finally, the solemn

ex cathedra pronouncement from the throne of Peter: "Wherefore . . . with the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul in union with Our own, we declare and define the dogma to be divinely revealed that the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, at the end of her earthly life was in body and soul assumed into heaven." It was a sublime moment — of corporate mysticism, when every fibre of one's being thrills with the oneness of the Church — the union of the faithful with their lawful pastors under one visible Head. It was as if Vatican Hill suddenly became the Mount of the Beatitudes, when the Voice of divine Love assured us once again: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall possess the land." Indeed, the earth that blossomed forth a Savior has been exalted by that same Savior to a place above the stars to reign with Him forever.

Great as is the joy of my heart at this manifestation of the tremendous spiritual power residing in the Vicar of Christ, much more intimate and deep is its response to the ceremony that marked the eve of the feast. An evening procession, vivid with color and tremulous torchlight and multiple candlelight, escorted the Roman Madonna, *Salus Populi Romani*, from her shrine in the Basilica of St. Mary Major to the Square of St. Peter. At the moment Our Lady's picture was handed into the care of the presiding Cardinal, a voice resounding and clear rang out through the hush and darkness of the broad plaza. It was the voice of the Holy Father from his place of prayer high in the Vatican. On his knees in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, he prayed with the simplicity of the humblest child of Mary and his prayer came forth to his children waiting below, as a universal plea — the petition of the Father of Christendom to the Mother of Christians in the hour of their deepest need. It lovingly offered Our Mother this new jewel for her crown in a mosaic of century-old praises and pleas. I hope you will see the whole text, but can offer you only the tender closing lines:

"And from this earth, over which we tread as pilgrims, comforted by our faith in future resurrection, we look to you, our life, our sweetness and our hope; draw us onward with the sweetness of your voice, that one day, after our exile, you may show us Jesus, the blessed Fruit of your womb, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary."

It rings in my ears like the echo of Newman's plea, almost a hundred years ago, "Shine on us, dear Lady, with thy bright countenance, like the sun in his strength, O *Stella matutina*, O harbinger of peace, till our year is one perpetual May. . . . O Mary, my hope, O Mother undefiled, fulfil to us the promise of this Spring."

It is an assurance to every member of the Church that our Father in Christ is strong in apostolic love as well as in apostolic faith. It makes us turn to our Mother with some of the warmth of his spacious human heart, as we say "May thy soul be in us, O Mary, to magnify the Lord! May thy spirit be in us to rejoice in God our Savior."

May that joy of Mary's send our spirits soaring to meet her on her throne among the stars, but may it also send us to dust a hidden stairway more lovingly, or to bend with greater sympathy above the rebellious tears of a child.

Lovingly in Mary's spirit of joy. . . .

DEAR SISTER:

Your lyric reflections have lifted my heart lightly with yours to follow our Queen assumed into heaven, for I have always loved Lady Day, and now more than ever. But my words, I fear, will limp along the ground.

Have you pondered the appropriateness of November 1st for the promulgation of the dogma? Have you thought of it as a sequel to the institution of the Feast of Christ the King, to crown the Holy Year 1925? It seems to make the Assumption do for Mary what the Ascension does for Christ: establish her on her throne as Queen of all the saints — Queen-Mother and Queen-Spouse of Christ the King of Kings. It surely gives the Feast a new note of joy. In our hearts, at least, it will have a new name — Feast of All the Saints under the Queenship of Mary.

Lovingly in union with all the members of the Queen's Household. . . .

ON PRAYING ALWAYS

FROM time immemorial the great lovers of God have tried to carry out our Lord's injunction to "pray always" (Luke 18, 1) and that of St. Paul of "praying without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5, 17). Ascetic writers too have tried to show how this

program of "praying without ceasing" might be carried out, when they develop such topics as habitual recollection or the presence of God.

In an attempt to reach this life of habitual recollection, both religious and others often expose themselves to great nervous strain and brain fag, because they are either trying to say ejaculations or keeping God's presence *practically constantly* before their minds. It normally requires great physical strength and special graces to do this.

If we could be shown that habitual prayer is possible by a more safe and easy way, no doubt, in many cases difficulties and strains could be avoided. It strikes me that the late Archbishop Goodier, S.J., has give us a very excellent way for accomplishing this very task (*Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, pp. 132-135). What will be said here then is merely a recounting and an explanation of his treatment, which everyone should know at first hand by reading the above reference.

The problem, then, that we are concerned with is to find a way of making vitally prayerful those periods outside our fixed and extra prayer. By fixed prayer is meant such prayers as the Rosary, the Office, the Angelus and other ordinary routine prayers, while by extra prayer is meant those personal devotions and prayers proper to each individual. How can these periods outside of our regular prayer be vitalized by prayer or made a constant prayer?

Here is where Archbishop Goodier steps in to show us the way with his famous threefold prayer: conscious, subconscious and unconscious. He does not precisely define what conscious, subconscious and unconscious prayer are, because he feels, I suppose, that the words are sufficiently clear in themselves. He rather gives several examples which certainly make his mind clear. Let us then take up in turn, 1) conscious, 2) subconscious and, finally, 3) unconscious prayer.

I. CONSCIOUS PRAYER. This prayer need not necessarily be expressed in words; it may be but a flash across the mind or a sigh of love in the will. It is well for us to recall that both the mind and the will can act without external words.

Examples of conscious prayer are aspirations in the midst of our actions and acts of purity of intention. *Passive conformity to God's will*, or the desire to be what God wants us to be, is another example of conscious prayer, for here we allow ourselves to be spir-

itually sculptured by God Himself according to His divine specifications and hence there is present a real implicit psychological union between God and us — or a prayer. Prayer might be defined as paying attention to God. In this passive union with God we are certainly paying attention to Him.

To do what God wants us to do, or active conformity with God's will, is a further example of conscious prayer. Here we ourselves are rather the sculptors who spiritually fashion ourselves with the help of God's grace according to the lineaments expressed by the divine Master. Again we have an implicit psychological union with God and an attending to Him — or a prayer.

Archbishop Goodier says that imitation of Christ in a particular action is a prayer and this seems plausible for the reasons assigned previously in explaining why active conformity to God's will is a prayer. What a great motive we have for imitating our Blessed Lord all day long!

Finally, it should be obvious that recalling and living in God's presence in the Eucharist, in the divine indwelling, or in His natural presence in all things, is a prayer. This is usually known by the term recollection.

From these examples of Archbishop Goodier we can see that conscious prayer is neither uncommon nor difficult and that it is a major factor in making possible an habitually recollected life.

II. SUBCONSCIOUS PRAYER. Subconscious prayer is a kind of prayer which is the result of a habit. In this state the soul rather spontaneously turns to God when unoccupied. Examples of this prayer are aspirations *spontaneously* and *effortlessly* made and faithful cooperation with God's grace. In cooperating with the grace of God we are attending, listening and carrying out the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. And because we are attending and listening to God as well as reciprocating His wishes, we have an active union with Him, or a prayer.¹

¹Father de Guibert, S.J., sheds much light on the nature of prayer in the following remark: "An express adhering to the divine action in us is always prayer, but there are many prayers in which such an adherence is not present but implicitly; on the other hand, every prayer is really and expressly some elevation of the mind (intellect and affection) to God and every such elevation, made for the purpose of worshipping God, is true prayer. Sometimes this elevation will be nothing but that deep and obscure adherence to the divine action and divine good pleasure; any such elevation, whatever form it have, is strictly prayer" (*Theol. Spir. Asc. et Mys.*, p. 214).

In the light of this remark we can see why active and passive conformity to God's will, imitation of Christ in a particular instance and faithful cooperation with God's grace are instances of prayer.

This subconscious prayer is a very important factor for growing in the great spiritual fundamentals of abnegation, detachment, abandonment and habitual prayerfulness, and the practice of these latter in turn nourishes this subconscious prayer.

III. UNCONSCIOUS PRAYER. Unconscious prayer is a kind of *spiritual instinct unconsciously developed* whereby we judge all things in the light and sight of God. Here prayer becomes *a second nature*. This instinct is the soul of prayer. Most likely this prayer is the result of the gifts of the Holy Ghost being very operative. These gifts, or divine instincts, give us *instinctive* rather than reasoned activity. Souls in this state turn to God rather spontaneously and instinctively in the midst of sorrow, trials, joys, etc., just as a little child spontaneously refers to its mother all its joys, sorrows, mishaps, etc. Such souls instinctively see the hand of God in the various trials and mishaps of their lives. Aspirations, such as, "God be blest," "Blessed be the will of God" and "Lord, rest his soul," frequently and instinctively come from their lips.

This then is a brief explanation of Archbishop Goodier's conscious, subconscious and unconscious prayer. By means of it we can without strain raise our mind and heart to God in every action of the day and make life itself a constant prayer. Many too, who feel that their lives are very unprayerful, will find to their satisfaction that they are praying always. Others will see that prayer should be much more than just saying prayers or making meditations, but that it should be an attitude of mind and heart, a life and a state. But most of all, perhaps, it seems that we have in Archbishop Goodier's explanation, not only a *plausible*, but a *reasonably sure* and *attainable* solution of the secret of praying always or without ceasing.

One word more. There may be some who will object to Archbishop Goodier's use of the words *subconscious* and *unconscious*. I myself would prefer other expressions, such as, *habitual prayer* instead of his expression *subconscious prayer*, and *subconscious* or *spontaneous* prayer for his expression *unconscious prayer*. Still, here we are looking more for ideas than terminology and these Archbishop Goodier very successfully provides.

ROBERT B. EITEN, S.J.

LIBRARY NOTES

THE SCHOOL OF THE LORD'S SERVICE. Volume III. Meditation, Particular Examen, and Practical Application for Every Day of the Year, Based on the Rule of St. Benedict. By the Rev. Bernard A. Sause, O.S.B. A Grail publication, St. Meinrad, Indiana. 1951. vii-575 pages. Cloth, \$4.00.

In this meditative commentary on the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, the third of the series, the author completes a truly monumental piece of work, the first of its kind by an American Benedictine. This volume is devoted to four major topics, that is, the spirit of detachment, good zeal and the practices, interpretations and attitudes that have grown from the Rule. Climaxing these parts is the fourth section on intimate union with God.

In discussing good zeal, Father Sause has hit upon the happy solution of naming thirty great Benedictines (many canonized saints — others uncanonized but noted for some outstanding contribution, such as Father Augustine Baker, de Rancé, Mabillon, Guéranger) as exemplars of the particular type of zeal under consideration. The result is a section that is valuable not only for its ascetical and moral reflections, but that gives one an introductory glimpse into Benedictine history, thus rendering the book doubly valuable for convents with limited library facilities.

All in all, the three volumes contain a wealth of ascetical and historical material not readily accessible elsewhere. They reflect years of research and study and teaching on the part of the writer, who deserves congratulations on the completion of a work that merits a lasting place among ascetical writing of the Benedictine school of thought.

S.L.



JEANNE JUGAN. Sister Marie of the Cross, Foundress of the Institute of the Little Sisters of the Poor 1792-1879. By Msgr. Francis Trochu. Translated by Hugh Montgomery. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland. 1950. xii-288 pages, \$3.75.

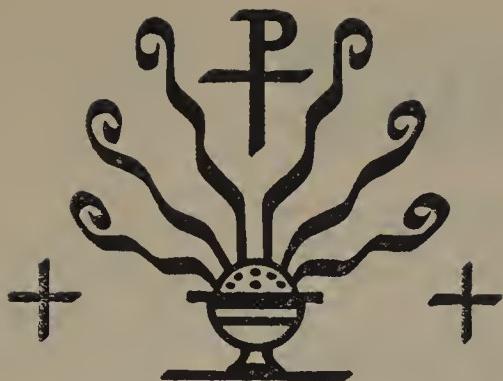
In an age when advertising seems a necessity even in religious communities, the life of Jeanne Jugan is a reminder that there is no substitute for complete trust in the Providence of God. For years this daughter of independent Cancalais fishermen loved and prayed and worked in obscurity, knowing only that she should not marry nor join any existing religious community. Today it is easy enough to see, with Msgr. Trochu's help, that she was being led gradually to her great mark, the foundation of a community dedicated to the service of the poor.

But only God Himself, who asked it of her generosity, knows the price she paid so that humility would be the outstanding virtue of her Little Sisters. Even while she was receiving secular awards (for instance, a Masonic medal!) for her extraordinary success in caring for the destitute, she was already being deprived of her rightful place in the growing community. This despoiling continued beyond the end of her life, the last twenty years of which she spent in the novitiate with no official position. Unaware that saintly old Sister Marie of the Cross was really their Mother Foundress, class after class of novices was formed by her example of devotion. "And the stronger a man is in the beginning, the more may he look to suffer great martyrdom in the end."

Msgr. Trochu's handling of his interesting material is straightforward and fair. Well able to see the value, even the necessity of the kind of martyrdom Jeanne Jugan suffered, he is human enough to admit his perplexity at the mentality immediately responsible for it and to be grateful that the early history of the community did not remain falsified.

Chapters XVI, XVII and XVIII are valuable for all religious. In them, depending largely on the memory of the novices who lived with Sister Marie of the Cross, Msgr. Trochu shows the "Little Way" in action, centered around the Mass and holy Communion. The secret of her loving fortitude is revealed in these words: "Go and find Him when your strength and patience are giving out, when you feel lonely and helpless. Jesus is waiting for you in the Chapel. Say to Him: 'You know well what is happening, my dear Jesus. I have only you, and you know all. Come to my aid!' And then go your way and don't worry about knowing how you are going to manage. It is enough to have told our good Lord. He has an excellent memory."

S.L.



Be mindful \oplus Lord of
Thy Servants and Handmaids.

Sister M. Salesia Wagner, O.S.F.; Sister M. Benedicta Gorska, O.S.F., Wheaton, Illinois.

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who are gone before us
with the sign \oplus of faith
and sleep in the sleep
of peace. [Canon of Mass]

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